UNITED NATIONS

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1809
13 January 1995

FRIDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Security Council extends MINURSO mandate to 31 May; approves expansion of Mission to expedite voter identification process in Western Sahara.

+ In second meeting today, Security Council extends UNOMIL mandate until 13 April; calls on Liberian parties to work together to implement Accra Agreement.

+ Secretary-General meets with Swedish Prime Minister in Stockholm; lays wreath at Dag Hammarskjold tomb in Uppsala.

+ Security Council extends suspension of certain economic sanctions against Federal Republic of Yugoslavia for 100 days; Russian Federation abstains from voting on resolution.

+ Security Council extends UNOMIG mandate until 15 May; voices concern at lack of progress towards political solution of Georgian/Abkhaz conflict.

+ United Nations agencies suspend non-emergency operations in Mogadishu to protest continued detention of French aid worker; UNOSOM II headquarters to be relocated to Mogadishu airport.

+ Secretary-General appoints Major-General Joseph Kinzer of United States as Force Commander of UNMIH.

+ Committee on Elimination of Discrimination against Women to hold fourteenth session at Headquarters from 16 January to 3 February.

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The Security Council today approved the expansion of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO) to ensure the timely completion of the identification process for the referendum, and extended the

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Mission's mandate to 31 May. It also decided to consider extending the mandate beyond that date in the light of progress towards the holding of the referendum and the implementation of the Settlement Plan for the Territory.

By unanimously adopting resolution 973 (1995), the Council asked the Secretary-General to report by 31 March to confirm the logistical, personnel and other arrangements required for the deployment of MINURSO at full strength. The expansion of the Mission will require an extra 105 civilian police monitors, 124 international and 35 local staff, as well as 12 observers from the Organization of African Unity (OAU). The Council said it expected to be able, on the basis of the Secretary-General's report and in accordance with the Settlement Plan, to confirm 1 June as the date for the start of the transitional period. The referendum would then take place in October.

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In a second meeting today, the Security Council extended the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) until 13 April. It expressed deep concern at the failure of the Liberian parties to agree on the composition of the new Council of State, as stipulated in last month's Accra Agreement, and called on them to work together to implement the Agreement. The Council called on the parties, specifically, to uphold the cease-fire and to resume the disarmament and demobilization of combatants. It took that action by unanimously adopting resolution 972 (1995).

The Council demanded that the Liberian factions facilitate humanitarian deliveries and strictly respect the status of personnel belonging to UNOMIL, the Economic Community of West African States' Monitoring Group (ECOMOG), and humanitarian organizations. It reminded all Member States of their obligation to comply with the arms embargo imposed under resolution 788 (1992). The Council asked the Secretary-General to base any decision to return UNOMIL to its authorized strength on the existence of an effective cease-fire and on the Mission's ability to carry out its mandate.

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Continuing his official visit to Sweden, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali today had a meeting with Prime Minister Ingmar Carlsson. They discussed the United Nations financial crisis, the increasing role of regional organizations and the situations in Nagorny Karabakh, the former Yugoslavia and Rwanda. They also dealt with the World Summit on Social Development, to be held in Copenhagen in March.

At a joint press conference following the meeting, the Secretary-General expressed his gratitude for Sweden's outstanding support for the United Nations over the past 50 years. The Prime Minister pledged that his country would contribute constructively to the ongoing debate on the future of the Organization.

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Mr. and Mrs. Boutros-Ghali were the guests of honour at a luncheon hosted by King Carl Gustaf and Queen Silvia at the Royal Palace. The Secretary-General later departed for Uppsala, where he participated in a wreath-laying ceremony at the tomb of former Secretary-General Dag Hammarskjold.

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The Security Council yesterday extended its suspension of certain economic sanctions against the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro) for a further period of 100 days. Restrictions on air travel, maritime traffic, sporting events and cultural exchanges were suspended by resolution 943 (1994) for an initial 100 days, provided that the border between the Federal Republic and Bosnia and Herzegovina were closed.

By adopting resolution 970 (1995) by 14 votes in favour to none against, with 1 abstention (Russian Federation), the Council welcomed the measures taken by the Federal Republic to maintain the effective closure of the border with Bosnia and Herzegovina. It called on all States and others concerned to respect the sovereignty, territorial integrity and international borders of all States in the region.

The Council asked the Secretary-General to report every 30 days on the border closure and to immediately report any evidence that the Federal Republic was not effectively implementing it. Any report to that effect would terminate the suspension of sanctions unless the Council decided to the contrary.

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The Security Council has extended the mandate of the United Nations Observer Mission in Georgia (UNOMIG) until 15 May. It expressed deep concern at the lack of progress towards a comprehensive political solution of the Georgian/Abkhaz conflict, and at the slow pace of return of refugees and displaced persons. The Council urged the parties to refrain from any unilateral actions which could complicate or hinder the political process. It took that action yesterday, by unanimously adopting resolution 971 (1995).

The Council also urged the parties to intensify efforts to achieve an early and comprehensive political settlement, including on the political status of Abkhazia, fully respecting the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Georgia. Those efforts would be made under the auspices of the United Nations, with the assistance of the Russian Federation as facilitator, and with the participation of the Organization on Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE).

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United Nations agencies have suspended non-emergency operations in Mogadishu until further notice to protest the continued detention of Rudy Marq, an aid worker with the non-governmental organization AICF. Mr. Marq, a French national, was kidnapped in the Somali capital almost a month ago. International non-governmental organizations suspended their non-emergency operations after demands for his release yesterday were not met, according to a United Nations spokesman.

Meanwhile, the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM II) will relocate its headquarters from the embassy compound to Mogadishu airport over the weekend.

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The Secretary-General has appointed Major-General Joseph Kinzer of the United States as Force Commander of the United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH). Major-General Kinzer has been Deputy Commanding General of the United States Fifth Army in Texas since September 1994.

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The situation of women in Croatia will be among the issues discussed by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women when it holds its fourteenth session at Headquarters from 16 January to 3 February. The Committee will also examine the measures being taken by 13 States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women to ensure equal participation of women in political, economic and cultural life.

The 23-member expert Committee is the monitoring body for the implementation of the 1979 Convention. States parties are required to submit an initial report within one year of accession to the Convention and periodic reports at least every four years. Reports should detail legislative, judicial, administrative or other measures adopted by States to give effect to the provisions of the Convention and progress achieved towards that end.

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